Faith & Inspiration

Perceiving Messiah

By Vincent V. Marshburn

A careful study of Scripture reveals that God foresaw the need for a plan of redemption for Creation.

The need would be precipitated by Satan's meddling and manipulation of our doubts and ambitions and by humanity's capitulation to our myopic passions and insistence on self-reliance.

This grand project of propitiation would proceed in a very particular manner and on a very particular schedule as events of human history unfolded. It would manifest a multitude of signs and omens along the way, and it would appear to presage a specific individual who would embody the culmination and convergence of God's holiness, wrath, judgment, mercy, and compassion (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10).

From as early as the first book in the Biblical narrative we observe indications of God's intention to employ the offspring of a prolific lineage to deliver ultimate victory over evil, establish an eternal divine kingdom, and serve as the instrument of benediction and blessing to all (Genesis 3:15; 22:18; 28:14; 49:10).

Despite the fact that prophetic allusions to the Messiah persist throughout the Hebrew scripture, there may not always have been a consistent or cohesive understanding of how this Messiah would materialize. The Bible periodically proclaims that only those graced with spiritual insight are able to recognize the significance of certain Scriptural statements, and only those who genuinely seek the truth are able to discern its evidence and grasp its wisdom (Deuteronomy 29:4; Proverbs 20:12; Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:16).

Thus, it should perhaps not be altogether surprising that the Incarnation of Jesus caught many off guard. While many may have been awaiting the emergence of some conquering, militaristic hero who would fit the mold that had been formulated over centuries of speculation, a seemingly unremarkable son of a carpenter would probably not have been the first image of Messiah in most minds. Interestingly, there were those who did seem to have eyes to see among the many who missed the subtlety and shades of nuance. Shepherds were invited to witness the miraculous birth. A lone devoted priest was granted the epiphany of a lifetime when dedicating a singular infant. Many on the fringes of society caught glimpses of majesty and mystery and were transformed.

It should also not be surprising that a Messiah would be met with the full range of emotional and psychological responses — from embrace and acceptance to derision and rejection — from those around him, including both alleged followers and presumed enemies; from family and friends and from strangers.

In the television series "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine," the people of the planet Bajor generally possess a deeply spiritual culture. Their sacred texts include a prophecy about an outsider who would arrive as an Emissary of the Prophets and discover a previously hidden "Celestial Temple."

In the very first episode, Commander Benjamin Sisko, a Starfleet officer assigned to oversee the titular orbiting space station, is identified as this predicted Emissary when he discovers a stable wormhole in space near the planet Bajor in the vicinity of Deep Space Nine. The Bajorans as a whole perceive this wormhole as the prophesied Celestial Temple and thus perceive Sisko as the Emissary who has fulfilled their scripture.

Driven by scientific curiosity, Sisko goes so far as to explore the interior of the wormhole and encounters extra-dimensional beings residing within the extraordinary astronomical phenomenon. His interaction with these wormhole aliens – understood to be the proverbial Prophets – only serves to further promote his impression as the Emissary in the eyes of the majority of Bajorans.

Major Kira Nerys is the Bajoran liaison officer stationed aboard Deep Space Nine. Her initial reaction to Sisko's designation as the Emissary is one of skepticism and resistance. However, after he enters the wormhole and actually returns and demonstrates his ability to communicate with the alien beings within, Kira feels compelled to admit the possibility of Sisko's potentially mystical nature. In a later episode, Kira concedes the point.

SISKO: *Do you really believe that I'm the Emissary?*

KIRA: *I guess I always have. I never wanted to admit it to myself. It's hard to work for someone who's a religious icon.*

Throughout the series, others in Sisko's life find his role as Emissary to be curious, awkward, or even disturbing. His own son, Jake, becomes especially concerned when it appears that Benjamin's life is in jeopardy due to this spiritual mantle and its accompanying visions that sometimes have a deleterious physical effect.

JAKE: *It's this Emissary stuff. It scares me a little. ...*

SISKO: *I know it hasn't been easy, Jake.*

JAKE: *I don't want it to happen again.*

SISKO: *You know, I didn't ask to be the Emissary. But for better or worse, I guess that's what I am. Except for being your dad.*

One of Sisko's closest friends, Jadzia Dax, a fellow Starfleet officer, often does her best to try to keep him as grounded in reality as possible.

DAX: *You know how Starfleet feels about this Emissary thing. It makes them very uncomfortable that you've allowed the Bajorans to view you as a religious icon. It used to make you uncomfortable, too.*

SISKO: *Not anymore. I guess the Prophets have spoken to me one too many times.*

And of course, there are those who simply reject the very notion of Sisko's divine destiny outright, motivated by their own interpretation of the faith augmented by personal ambition for power and prestige. A prominent spiritual leader named Winn Adami often masks her obvious resentment and contempt behind a passive-aggressive facade of entirely superficial civility while continually scheming and conniving to undermine Sisko's status.

SISKO: *... the last time you were here at this station, you claimed that I was a danger to Bajor. That I was here to destroy your people.*

WINN: *What I was really saying, what I have always maintained is that you, Emissary, were sent here by the Prophets to challenge our long-held beliefs.*

All the while, Winn ends up completely missing the opportunity to appreciate and experience the fulfillment of her faith in a possibly unconventional fashion. Certainly, Sisko does not meet her expectations in this regard.

There are various factors which influence one's own perception of Messiah. Prophecies, expectations, personal agendas, and reality of circumstances can all contribute.

Our emotional and mental responses can range from hope and desperation to envy and cynicism to incredulity and denunciation. In Jesus's time, many of the presumed spiritual leaders were so perplexed and offended by his deeds and teachings that they exhibited the kind of spiritual blindness and deafness described by their very own scriptures and prophets.

We should pray that, as the apostle Paul wrote, the eyes of our heart may be enlightened to see God's calling us to redemption through the Messiah who has come (Ephesians 1:18).

Lifestyle

25th Hispanic Women of Distinction Celebration Honor 13 Latinas

The 2026 Hispanic Women of Distinction

Photo by Downtown Photo

By Cameron Smith

Thirteen women from across South Florida were honored for their contributions to medicine, business, public service, nonprofit leadership and community advocacy during the 25th Hispanic Women of Distinction celebration.

The sold-out luncheon was held Aug. 21 at Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Hollywood. The honorees were selected from more than 60 nominations submitted across Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties.

Hispanic Women of Distinction was founded in 2001 by the late Dr. Erwin M. Vasquez, a Venezuelan cardiologist, philanthropist and publisher of El Heraldo de Broward. Vasquez envisioned a program that would recognize the accomplishments and influence of Latina women while creating opportunities for future generations.

"We have built much more than an awards program; we have created a movement," said Elaine Miceli Vasquez, co-founder and producer of the event.

"The next generation is watching us. Today, young girls can see themselves reflected in women who speak their language, honor their culture and show them that no dream is beyond their reach."

The 2026 Hispanic Women of Distinction were Jacqueline Ceballos, Maria Jose Haimovitch, Michelle Harper, Alex Llerena, Martha Guerra-Kattou, Janet Lorenzo-Garcia, Griselle Marino, Cristina Martinez-Gonzalez, Maria C. Mejia, Maria Alejandra Membreno, Michelle "Mish" Pelaez, Nercy Barroso Radcliffe and Soraya Rivera-Moya.

Miami-Dade Sheriff Rosanna "Rosie" Cordero-Stutz was recognized as the 2026 Latina Pioneer of the Year.

Cordero-Stutz has more than 30 years of law-enforcement experience and is the first Hispanic woman to serve as a sheriff in Florida history.

The luncheon began with a reception featuring music by Mariachi Voces de America. Guests also attended a business expo and participated in raffles and a silent auction.

The American Lung Association was selected as the event's 2026 nonprofit beneficiary. Money generated through the silent auction, raffles, sponsorships and advertising will support programs focused on lung health, respiratory-disease prevention and cleaner air.

The program also celebrated South Florida's cultural traditions through music, dance and the annual parade of former honorees. Performers from Carnaval de Barranquilla Miami led the procession of past Hispanic Women of Distinction honorees.

Myriam Masihy of NBC 6 and Telemundo 51 served as mistress of ceremonies for the 18th year.

Elected officials, diplomatic and consular representatives, business executives, community leaders and former honorees attended the milestone celebration.

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